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ABSTRACT

This document brings together the good practice that was developed and demonstrated through a series of pilot projects that were funded in 2001 by the United Kingdom's Learning and Skills Council to extend outreach literacy and numeracy provision in local community settings. The guide's nine chapters discuss the following topics: (1) the development phase (research, planning, preparation); (2) engaging new learners; (3) advice, guidance, and support; (4) initial assessment and recording learners' progress and achievement; (5) working in partnerships; (6) staffing and staff development; (7) record keeping and assessment; (8) using information technology; and (9) asylum seekers and refugees. All chapters include checklists and one or more case studies. The following are among the 59 criteria for good practice that are listed in the appendix: (1) target people who are not necessarily following a basic skills program but where a need has been identified; (2) do not limit programs to specific target groups; (3) collaborate to break down barriers to learning; (4) work toward a community of interests; (5) embed basic skills in other provision or community activity; (6) focus on individual learners; (7) offer ongoing and personal support; (8) use mentors for ongoing support; and (9) use assessment that is sensitive and rigorous and helps learners to progress. (MN)

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Opening up a new world

A good practice guide for
delivering basic skills and ESOL
in the local community

**Sue Grief
Helen Murphy
Bhupinder Nijjar
Chris Taylor**

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The title "Opening up a new world" is a quotation from a learner on the 'Silver Surfers' course at Havering Adult College – The Learning Freeway. She attended an Information Technology course aimed at the over 50s in using the internet and this was her response when asked for feedback on the course.

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Introduction

In May 2000 the Secretary of State announced a new basic skills funding package of £20.25 million, of which £4 million was to extend basic skills provision in the community. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) was allocated £2 million to extend outreach provision in local community settings through pilot projects running from March to June 2001.

Early findings from the 64 pilot projects informed the Council's distribution of an additional £10 million allocated for further work to develop innovative approaches to community based basic skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) during the summer of 2001. Colleges and former external institutions were invited to bid to develop this provision.

The aim of the projects was to explore innovative and effective ways to attract new basic skills and ESOL learners from 'hard-to-reach' (groups and to build the capacity of institutions to undertake further outreach work. An important feature of this funding was that institutions were invited to apply for up to 10% of their total application for development costs.

Approximately 220 institutions applied to run projects between May and August 2001, involving an estimated 11,851 new learners in basic skills and ESOL provision. Additional funding allocated to the programme brought the project target of new learners to 15,342.

The Learning Skills Development Agency (LSDA) and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) won the tender to undertake support and evaluation of this programme. The aims of

* 'hard-to-reach' is a term we don't feel happy with but continue to use it as it is in common parlance. Who or what is hard to reach? If our institutions, colleges and schools are inaccessible or unwelcoming, it is we who are hard to reach. From the prospective learner's viewpoint, s/he is here and we are way over there.

the evaluation were to facilitate reports on the successes of the 220 projects and to identify and share best practice within and between projects. We also undertook to provide the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) (who had taken over from the FEFC) with a view of the strategic issues, relating to the development of basic skills and ESOL in community settings. LSDA and NIACE shared responsibility for visiting 10% of the projects (22 projects), this being a representative sample, which was intended to fulfil both an evaluative function and be helpful to the projects themselves.

This good practice guide is written primarily for basic skills tutors and managers but may also be of interest to funders and policy makers. It summarises the best basic skills practice in the 64 pilot projects and 220 main projects all over the country in 2001. It has drawn on evidence from the advisors' visits, telephone support, final project reports and learner evaluation. It is not exhaustive and offers only some of our ideas and reflections on the good work done in this programme.

1 The development phase – research, planning and preparation

As with many other ventures, the key to success in the delivery of literacy, numeracy and ESOL in local communities lies in the time and energy invested in advance in terms of research, planning and preparation. Many of the 'basic skills and ESOL in local communities' projects reported that development time had been vital while an even greater number cited more time for research and planning as something they would ensure if they were to run their project again.

"We were surprised at the time it takes to establish new links and work with new communities. We now know you need to take time to understand the history and background of communities."

Research of two kinds is needed. The first, research into the levels of need for literacy, numeracy or ESOL in the area and the gaps in provision, may already have been undertaken as part of the process of strategic planning. In some cases, research on need will be unnecessary if the need for basic skills or ESOL for a specific group or area is highlighted by another organisation or is known to be a result of previous consultation.

The second kind of research follows the identification of a target community. This involves learning about the needs, interests and aspirations of the target audience as well as the barriers that have prevented them from taking advantage of existing provision.

"Many people need to be attracted by alternative learning, which supports their own goals or triggers their enthusiasm, creates a positive self-image and enables people to better act in their own interests."

Stimulating demand for learning. An ideas paper on attracting new learners.

Ursula Howard

The best source of information is the potential learners themselves. Consultation in advance will ensure their concerns and preferences are taken into account and can encourage a sense of ownership of the learning programme. Working with community organisations is often the best way to access the target group.

Bolton Community College

Developing Financial Skills project

"Traditionally it is very difficult to recruit for courses dealing with basic financial and numeracy skills. Many experienced basic skills tutors find that such courses can be patronising – after all it is those that have had to live with little money for a long time who will often have the better home financial skills.

The teaching team went out to a number of community groups to assess the learning needs of their members and then built a course based on these negotiations and consulted with learners as the course progressed."

Research needs to include the practical arrangements for a course. Failure to check all the details can lead to problems and disappointment. One institution had an encouraging initial response from a local community group but recruitment was very low. When this was investigated it turned out that to reach the venue most learners would have needed to take two buses and make a walk a quarter of a mile from the bus stop. Not surprisingly very wet weather on the first day of the course meant most potential learners decided to stay at home. Of those that did make the effort three were told that the crèche at the centre was full.

Bromley College of Further and Higher Education

Keniston Housing Association Project

"Our project was intended to focus on an area of social housing, in an affluent part of the borough of Bromley. Although surrounded by relatively well-provided-for areas (this housing) was an area of deprivation with a high unemployment rate (250 people out of 850 on benefit). The local housing association was keen to provide some training opportunities for their tenants and the College was keen to work in partnership with them to provide basic skills training to aid residents in finding and keeping employment. It was planned that we would work with several partners and use the renovation of a community building as the vehicle for basic skills... crucial to the project, the local borough were to provide a mobile IT facility, backed by a library/crèche bus.

"The reality was very different. Although the housing association and some of the local residents had been involved in the initial discussions, when further detailed discussion began on confirmation of the funding, it became clear that the majority of residents did not want the local community centre to be renovated. They were hoping its poor state of repair would persuade someone to replace it!

"Barriers to learning come in all shapes and sizes – owing to the loss of the originally-planned venue we took up the offer of the housing association to use one of their offices. It was only towards the end of the project that we realised that we had erected a significant barrier to recruiting learners – we were asking them to come to the rent man's office to learn!! If anyone was in arrears with their rent there was little chance of persuading them to attend.

"In future projects we would consult far more widely and use a neutral venue to avoid identifying ourselves quite so closely with authority."

Taking time to think creatively about approaches to outreach provision can be valuable. Bolton Community College arranged a residential meeting to brainstorm ideas for their projects. However, as the case study of the Financial Skills course indicates, the ideas were checked out with community groups. It is all too easy to make assumptions and then encounter unexpected problems. In addition to checking for unanticipated barriers it is important to check that venues will fit the requirements of the activity and meet any relevant regulations in respect of disabled access, health and hygiene, or crèche provision.

Working in partnership, and particularly building new partnerships, takes time and this needs to be taken into account in planning a project. Meetings with partner organisations at an early stage are important to ensure that both parties share an understanding of the aims of the project and are clear about their respective roles.

Chapter 6 explores the importance of having the right staff for community provision. In planning outreach, development time needs to be allowed for the recruitment of suitable staff and, where necessary, to provide staff with the appropriate briefing or training before the project begins. In the 'Moving On' project run by Leicester College in hostels for the homeless, basic skills awareness sessions were delivered to staff in the three hostels during the development period. The aim was to enable them to assist with the recruitment and support of learners from the hostels. In Rotherham a range of staff were trained to ensure that the programme of home tuition and small groups could be delivered effectively.

Where literacy, numeracy or language skills were taught in the context of another subject time was needed to explore the ways in which these skills could be presented and developed through the course. Many projects mapped the courses to the national standards

for adult literacy and numeracy or to the new curricula. Where a subject specialist is to work alongside a basic skills tutor it is important that time is allowed for joint planning to ensure that the opportunities for basic skills or ESOL learning are used effectively.

Finally, however carefully plans are made, setbacks can occur. Quarantine restrictions for Foot and Mouth disease upset plans for a project in Cumbria while the closure of the pub that was to provide their venue took a project in Peterborough back to the drawing board. Flexibility and perseverance in the face of difficulties characterised a number of projects. It is wise to undertake some form of risk analysis and, where possible, to have another plan ready should things go wrong.

Checklist:

- Does our timetable for delivery allow sufficient time for research, recruitment and planning?
- Are we clear who our target audience are? Do we have evidence of the needs of this community?
- How will we ensure both that our provision will be relevant to the interests, needs and motivations of the target community and that we are fully aware of the various barriers that have previously prevented them taking up existing learning opportunities?
- Can we consult the potential learners directly?
- Can we consult a community organisation that has close links with the target community we plan to target?
- Is the venue chosen acceptable to the community? Is it easily accessible to potential learners? Does it meet all the practical requirements of the course? Does it meet any relevant regulations? Is it accessible to disabled learners?
- Have meetings with partner organisations been arranged prior to the start of the activity to ensure the roles and responsibilities of all parties are clear?

- Who will be responsible to ensure that all arrangements for support are in place?
- What is the timescale for recruitment of staff if necessary?
- What training or briefing will be needed by:
 - Basic skills or ESOL teachers?
 - Other subject teachers?
 - Staff from partner organisations?
- What time will be needed for basic skills or ESOL teachers and subject teachers to plan together?
- What time will be needed for course planning? How will subject teachers be included in this process?
- What flexibility can we build into the planning? Have we fully assessed the risks? Do you need a plan to fall back on?

2 Engaging new learners

This Government has set ambitious targets for widening participation, attracting new learners to basic skills provision. However, there are usually good reasons why those people who have basic skills needs have not come forward to take up opportunities. If they didn't like the idea of coming to classes before, why should they come now? What are we going to do to make it different? These projects, which received funding under the Basic Skills and ESOL in Local Communities programme, faced exactly this dilemma. The overall programme target was 17,500 new learners so, whatever else they did, providers had to recruit new learners.

Some of the projects we saw approached recruitment in exciting and imaginative ways. In many of the most successful projects, basic skills were implicit or embedded within other skills, and it was the attraction of the other activity that drew the learners in. But many practitioners are struggling with this tension – it's almost 'basic skills by stealth'. It raises questions of how and when one makes the basic skills element of the course explicit. Are the students simply *participating* in an activity or *learning* a new basic skill?

A number of projects used 'taster' courses, in sewing, welding or decorating, to attract new learners who were likely to have basic skills needs. These were not basic skills courses but were targeted at a specific hard-to-reach group to attract them into learning and provide a positive learning experience. Providers hoped learners would progress to basic skills as a result of this first positive taste.

We saw plenty of examples of good taster courses engaging the hardest-to-reach groups where learners'

progression routes at the end of the course could justify the initial experiment of the taster. Staff in Hastings worked with learners who had suffered from alcohol abuse. Disaffected young men in Bolton were motivated by a creative arts 'Junk Art' whereby they learned welding skills. On these courses, these learners had positive experiences of learning, perhaps for some of them, the first of their lives. The importance of this cannot be underestimated because this type of engagement seems most likely to draw in learners with basic skills needs. If we are required to engage with the hardest-to-reach groups we need the very best, most imaginative routes into learning with appropriate funding to support it.

In addition, we saw courses one might describe as 'engagement courses', to attract basic skills learners. In these courses basic skills were integrated into learning and recruitment and participation of learners was good. The projects have demonstrated that these courses have benefited new learners; many feeling more confident, learning new skills, reporting increased self-worth and a feeling of value. Many learner evaluations revealed that they had a positive learning experience and would like to progress further.

Medway Council – Oaklands Project

The course was planned in response to the individual needs and skill levels. The target learners were males and publicity was clear about the numeracy and literacy contents of these courses. An integrated learning approach was used combining ICT with numeracy, literacy and communication skills.

These proved to be very successful in engaging learners to participate. Some examples of 'engagement courses' were sewing classes and a course leading to the driving theory test. The feature of these courses was that

basic skills ran through them, in a discreet thread, which did not appear to make the learners feel self-conscious or inadequate. Learners engaged in a variety of activities, attended regularly and contributed to teamwork.

We also saw good practice in courses which were 'pure' basic skills, where the purpose of the teaching and learning was 'up front'. The basic skills course developed and delivered to Army personnel by Uppingham Community College was such a course. The learners wanted to improve their basic skills to improve their chances of promotion in the Army. They were new learners with a shared motivation and explicit goals. The learners took a test at the beginning of the course and again at the end. In this situation a taster or engagement course was unnecessary. The learners knew what they wanted and improving basic skills was the way to achieve it. The teaching was of a high quality and the targets met.

Bolton Community Education

A wide range of courses were targeted at different groups of reluctant learners and were successful in recruiting adults with basic skills needs who had not previously attended classes. Projects were located local to learners so that those people who were not confident to travel could participate. There were 11 practical projects covering a wide range of activities, focused on the interests of a particular group of learners, such as:

- Interior design and decorating – 'Changing Rooms'
- Understanding credit and welfare rights – 'Financial Management'
- Welding Skills – 'Junk Art'
- Taster hair and beauty course for Asian Women – 'Introduction to Hair and Beauty'
- 'Making Children's Clothes'
- Parents with children at primary school – 'Keeping up with the kids'

For one series of tasters, referrals came through social services, teachers and head teachers in schools. Courses were advertised as offering the chance to learn a new activity alongside improving communication skills and basic skills.

'Changing Rooms'

The project team felt that the £60 secured to fund the costs of decorating for asylum seeker's rooms was an important element in the success of the Changing Rooms

course. The tutor said it was worth '100 times that'. The asylum seekers' group had not been settling into their single rooms and were finding it difficult to feel at all at home in the community. They were overwhelmed when they allowed to decorate their own rooms and were enthusiastic to use the activity as a means to learn new language skills and improve their numeracy.

Across the projects the pattern of delivery was variable and flexible. Some projects included trips, events and residential visits. Tutors assessed work completed following teaching and learning activities and logged achievement on the record sheets. This was an effective way of tracking individual achievement. In addition, if students were taking courses with basic skills support elements, all learning that took place could be tracked on the one log sheet. Basic skills support was integrated generally within the portfolio of courses offered under this pilot project. The ethos within the projects supported student empowerment and courses reflected the needs and preferences of students.

Checklist:

- If the potential learners didn't like the idea of coming to classes before, why should they come now? What have we done to do to make it different?
- Are the students simply participating in an activity or learning a new basic skill?
- Does the tutor (welding, cookery, etc) have basic skills teaching expertise or will the course need to be double staffed?
- Has the basic skills element of the course been identified and mapped to the new standards and curriculum?
- How and when will we make the basic skills element of the course explicit?
- Have we provided opportunities for learners to progress on to basic skills courses as a result of this first positive taste of learning?
- Have we identified the elements of the taster course which have made it successful in order to continue these elements as the learners progress?

3 Advice, guidance and support

Most of the successful projects funded under this programme were the ones that provided learners with a high level of guidance and support. These tended to be projects with multi-skilled tutors who were able to bring local knowledge or skills across the curriculum to the learners. For example, tutors who were bilingual and could effectively communicate with learners were an asset in many of the courses.

We observed a highly-skilled young woman working in a Muslim Centre for Filton College who had the personal qualities to advise and support learners and gain their trust. Staff working in a Family Centre in Westminster had excellent local contacts and used these networks to support the learners. This particular project's success relied largely on the skills and expertise of the Bengali-speaking tutor. Through her contacts she was able to recruit Bengali-speaking women for the course. An enthusiastic and committed tutor working in Hastings was actually a Leisure and Tourism specialist but her outreach to hostel residents gained the trust of potential learners.

Tutors who had a broad knowledge of the relevant local provision, an understanding of the learners and who could relate to them were well placed to offer guidance in an informal way. The guidance given varied depending on the type of courses being provided and the needs of participants.

As many basic skills tutors know, some of the most useful advice and guidance does not happen at the allotted time. Learners don't always come to the advice session on the timetable. Just as in real life, people ask

questions as they occur to them or when they gather up the courage. Learners with basic skills needs, in particular, may not feel able to ask advice from yet another well-meaning professional. They may prefer to ask someone they know and trust; the housing worker or the basic skills tutor.

In a project run by Leicester College, basic skills staff found that they needed to do a lot of 'hanging around' in a hostel for the homeless, to raise awareness of hostel staff and to answer questions from residents who were preparing to move into independent accommodation. This was extremely valuable time. The special funding of this programme, allowing up to 10% for development, allowed this to happen.

The most successful projects showed that it is vital to provide support for these hard-to-reach learners in order for them to attend. In order to reach the widening participation targets set, additional funding to support the new learners is essential. Analysis of the visit reports, learner evaluations and final reports showed that childcare facilities such as crèches, transport provision, easily-accessible venues and the

Suffolk County Council Education Service

A Scottish traveller mother expressed a keen interest in getting help with spelling. She said she would like to join us in the afternoons in the small group room we had set up. She never attended. We kept in contact and she eventually said that she was too busy in the afternoons and evening sessions would be better. We provided evening sessions but she did not attend. She said she was still too busy. Home-tuition was suggested and she agreed but whenever the tutor arrived she said she was too busy. After several attempts we suggested a work pack that she could do on her own at home. The tutor called each week to look through her work pack and these visits gradually expanded into hour-long sessions. She thoroughly enjoyed both the work packs and the tuition. After several weeks she confided that she had been ashamed of her poor literacy skills and she felt she was unable to come to the group in spite of her desire to improve and still felt she could only work with the tutor whom she had known for over six years.

timing of courses was key to the success of the projects. Firstly, this attracted new learners who would have previously had such barriers to learning. It also helped to maintain attendance levels throughout the course.

Crèches should preferably be on the same site as the project. For example, some women on an ESOL course were offered a crèche facility for their children. However, this crèche was off-site and they were initially reluctant to send their children to it. It took them a while to get used to this and build the trust to use it. Chichester crèche staff were particularly flexible in accommodating a disruptive child in the crèche to support the mother's access to provision.

Filton College – Inner City Community Projects

Childcare was seen to have been invaluable in enabling learners to attend classes.

Participants had found it valuable to have bus fares reimbursed to attend classes.

Project funding made it possible to provide information, advice and guidance (IAG) at open-house events to new students.

The project co-ordinator provided tutorial support both informally as needed and in response to referrals from tutors. Tutorials helped students to work through any problems or difficulties they encountered.

Poor attendance or erratic attendance is a feature of this group of hard-to-reach learners. Past-funding structures have not allowed for this pattern of attendance and yet these projects illustrate that additional funding for support will be essential for future programmes working with this target group.

Tile Hill College – Foleshill and Hillfield Project

This project was established to attract new learners from a deprived ward. The project began as an open-ended discussion group to establish common interests and goals. This allowed the group to set its priorities with individual targets. Over the course of the project the confidence of the group and individuals within increased.

One learner, a young mother with a child with autism has taken on the education authorities to insist on adequate provision for her 5-year-old son. Previously, the local school had rejected him but with her increased confidence she felt able to continue until the situation was satisfactorily resolved.

One of our partners felt enabled to address her own basic skills needs and, through contact with the project tutors, has enrolled in a basic skills course at the local college/centre.

Three students with young children have enrolled on a basic skills workshop to look at strategies for developing maths skills through play. This will bring the students to the main college/centre and hopefully into contact with more formal adult learning.

Another young mum has finally gained the confidence in her own skills to enrol on an NVQ childcare course that she has been thinking about for years.

"The course made me feel more confident. I liked it because it made me busy during the weeks I have been attending college."

"This course was meant for me because I can speak English now and my writing has improved so much."

Havering Adult College – The Learning Freeway

Community Corners was a project established in three disadvantaged and distant corners of the borough of Havering. The project attracted new learners through a curriculum mix offer of non-threatening 'recreational' courses with a defined focus on extending basic skills through this stream of learning. All courses were taught by a specialist often with a basic skills qualification and were double staffed with a basic skills mentor. Students had access to one-to-one tutorial support with a basic skills tutor in addition to timetabled sessions. The project was particularly innovative and successful in the joining of 'corners' for outings, e-mail communications, compilation of Community Corners newsletters and finally in a one-day presentation event when students from all 'corners' made individual presentations about their learning and their individual and group successes. The presentation event was filmed and is a case study of the project's achievement and success.

Checklist:

- Can the initial advice and guidance be given by the tutor or do we need a specialist?
- Does the advisor have a knowledge of the relevant local provision and an understanding of the learners?
- Will advice and guidance be offered throughout the course as well as at the beginning?
- Are mother- tongue advisors or interpreters available?
- Could we provide one-to-one support or home visits if necessary?
- Have we set aside funding for practical support – travel, childcare provision, refreshment?
- Is the crèche on the same site as the basic skills provision, well-resourced, with appropriate multi-cultural equipment and books?
- Are the crèche workers bilingual?
- Have we provided opportunities for tutorial support as well as whole class teaching and learning?

4 Initial assessment and recording learners' progress and achievement

On short courses designed specifically to attract new learners' external accreditation is often neither appropriate nor viable. Some projects successfully enabled their learners to complete units of credit awarded by Open College Networks and a few used units of Wordpower and Numberpower but these were the exception.

There was no requirement on institutions to plan courses that led to qualifications or awards in literacy, numeracy or ESOL. Basic skills and ESOL provision that does not lead to accreditation is fundable by the LSC and institutions can claim achievement units for learners who achieve their goals, where these are 'set within' the national standards for adult literacy and numeracy. There was an expectation however, spelt out in the application for project funding, that individual learners' goals and achievements would be recorded and that these would be mapped to the national standards.

Some institutions were able to use the systems and paperwork they use in ongoing provision for project courses. Others created simpler paperwork specifically for the projects. Suffolk Basic Skills used a simple document contained within a folded A3 sheet that included a learning programme, targets for the course, a record of progress and a record of achievements.

Suffolk County Council

SUFFOLK BASIC SKILLS

Travellers' Project

LEARNING PROGRAMME

Name: _____

Tutor: _____

My long term goal is _____

My goals for this course are _____

Start Date: _____

Learning arrangements: _____

Suffolk Basic Skills Centre, 145 Community Centre, Highfield Road, Ipswich IP1 4DB, 01473 749837

Community Centre, Highfield Road, Ipswich IP1 4DB, 01473 749837

Community Centre, Highfield Road, Ipswich IP1 4DB, 01473 749837

Community Centre, Highfield Road, Ipswich IP1 4DB, 01473 749837

Initial assessment

Comments

Notes

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Initial assessment

Many projects provided an initial, individual interview for learners. Simply talking with a learner while they completed an enrolment form provided an unobtrusive opportunity to make an initial judgement on the learner's starting point.

Where the basic skills aspect of the course was explicit initial assessment was often quite thorough. Projects used a range of assessment tools. Some found the Fast Track Assessment appropriate. The IT-based BeST assessment was used by Filton College as was the Basic Skills Agency Initial Assessment Pack. Checklists and assessments designed by institutions themselves were also used.

The focus of the course run for the Army by Uppingham Community College meant initial assessment was not an issue.

Passing the Army promotion examination – Uppingham Community College

This project was a partnership between the Army and Uppingham Community College, the focus of the course being basic skills for promotion in the Army.

Each course was based on a very clear target – passing the Army promotion exam. Each course ran for four-and-a-half days over one week and took place in the well-equipped environment of the barracks education unit. On the morning of the first day, all learners undertook the Army English and Maths test. The basic skills staff marked the test, informed learners of the outcome and, from it, identified the literacy and numeracy areas to be worked on during the week. These were mapped to the new curriculum for both literacy and numeracy and recorded on an individual learning plan. Learners re-took a similar test again at the end of the week.

Other institutions felt uneasy about formal initial assessment particularly when the basic skills or ESOL were embedded within a course or activity with a different focus or the learners were particularly sensitive to anything that appeared to smack of school or formal learning.

Aware of the need for a starting point in order to identify realistic targets for learners and to provide a

Leicester College project in hostels for the homeless

It was agreed that the programme would focus on the 'Top 10 Basic Skills in Housing'. Learners and tutors agreed individual learning plans for initially two weeks. This was then reviewed if the learner decided to continue... Tutors focused on the immediate skill requirements expressed by the learner and took this as a basis for initial assessment of level. We felt that too lengthy an assessment process could be off-putting, so tutors used the first piece of work produced by the learner as an assessment tool. They were then able to focus on the skill area requested work towards individual curriculum targets... This small-step approach did provide motivation and confidence.

basis for the measurement of achievement some projects explored unobtrusive approaches to assessment.

Tile Hill College

There was no nationally-recognised assessment for the project ESOL courses. Tutors judged levels of speaking, listening reading and writing from conversations with students and their writing on forms.

The course itself as an assessment opportunity

Some projects felt that where the primary aim of the course was to engage new learners, an understanding of the learner's current level of skill and their learning needs was in itself an appropriate outcome of the course. As a result of their experience within the project, Northamptonshire Adult Education Service are working on a template that can be applied to a wide range of courses. This is intended to help tutors to use short courses where basic skills are embedded in other learning as an assessment tool. The intention is that each learner should leave the course with a bank of information, mapped to the national standards for literacy and numeracy, which will provide a basis for decisions on further learning. The learners themselves will also be more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and more confident to progress to further courses.

Individual learning plans

Some institutions were able to use the systems and paperwork they use in ongoing provision for project courses. Others created simpler paperwork specifically for the projects.

Tile Hill also produced a simplified learning plan for its ESOL outreach courses.

The 'Community Corners' project run by the Learning Freeway in Havering tracked learning in literacy and

Student's learning Plan

Name _____ Contacted date _____
 Class _____ Contact _____
 Primary Learning Language _____

Assessment

Language: Speaking _____ Reading _____ Writing _____
 Practical Skills: Cooking _____ Sewing _____
 Hand work _____ Interview work _____
 Postcode _____

Other help & support needed _____

Targets	Date achieved	Date	Tutorial 1	Tutorial 2
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

Form: PHSK/1/1/1/1

Tile Hill College

The course visited had a detailed plan with a useful session planning sheet that accommodated group and individual learning goals. At the end of the session, achievements were assessed including contribution to group sessions and understanding of topic issues.

All students had individual learning plans. Some courses used the standard Tile Hill College Basic Skills Learning Plan. The project courses at the Muslim Resource Centre used a shortened version.

All students had tutorials. Learning was checked through tutorials including assessment of portfolios. Also peer group evaluation evidenced softer outcomes such as confidence building.

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numeracy across a range of interest courses. They did this by using two documents: a Training and Action Plan (TAP) sheet, and tracking sheet. A system of individual tutorials provided the essential support learners needed to benefit from the opportunities and reflect on their learning.

The Learning Freeway, Havering

Some students were attending several courses, others just one. Students were attending for between 30-80 hours. The courses were roll-on, roll-off and it was possible to combine activities to produce an intensive programme for an individual. Tutorials were built into the delivery programme. 80% of the subject specialists were basic-skills trained.

The subject area course contents were mapped to Wordpower and Numberpower. Course outlines were planned for all courses including the basic skills elements required to meet other learning goals. Basic skills contents were also mapped within each session plan.

Group learning plans were used for each class. Each student had a tracking and TAP Sheet which identified the new skills and knowledge needed for each course. The tracking sheet identified the basic skills learning point for each session and collated the learning in basic skills for the individual for every course attended.

Community Corners 'Tap' sheet		
Student Name	Assessment Result Spelling Punctuation	Reading Numeracy
Course	Course	Course
Tutor	Tutor	Tutor
Mentor	Mentor	Mentor
Start Date	Start Date	Start Date
Course	Course	Course
Tutor	Tutor	Tutor
Mentor	Mentor	Mentor
Start Date	Start Date	Start Date
Supporting Skills and Knowledge	How I am going to learn it	Progress check Date Achievement

Tracking Sheet

Student Name:

Title of Course/Activity	Date	Start Time	Finish Time	Hrs Total	Basic Skills Teaching Points	Comments

Soft outcomes

For new learners, particularly the most vulnerable, the most important outcomes of a course are often those relating to the learner's confidence and self-esteem. While basic skills and ESOL teachers and staff from community organisations are often very aware of the value of these outcomes it is harder to assess, record and evidence these.

Hastings College of Arts and Technology

It was felt that the group of learners involved in the project were often nervous and sometimes difficult when confronted with some of the more mainstream methods of assessing and measuring progress. Partners from the project indicated a great need to have flexible, unintrusive ways of assessing and measuring progress. It was felt initially that only the 'softer' outcomes would be achieved, such as improving self-esteem and confidence and that those that formed the partnership were very aware of the need to look at ways to measure these.

The Seaview project in Hastings used photographs of learners to demonstrate their involvement in a range of activities and recorded their stories in their final report.

Some individual learning plans provided opportunity for learners and teachers to record 'other learning' and to include achievements that were evidenced outside the course.

There is acceptance across a wide range of providers of what constitutes good practice in the recording of learners' progress and achievement in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. This includes:

- initial assessment of the learner;
- a negotiated learning plan that identifies individual targets, the skills and knowledge that are needed to achieve these, and the methods and materials the teacher and learner will use;
- regular reviews to check the learner's progress and to record achievement against his/her targets.

Mapping learning goals and outcomes to the national standards

The projects took place over a period of time during which institutions were getting to grips with the national standards for literacy and numeracy and the new curricula for these subjects. The curriculum for ESOL and the Pre-Entry curriculum were still not available in their final forms. Many providers were still waiting for their staff to receive the intensive training in the use of the new curriculum.

A number of providers used the projects as an opportunity to explore how the national standards and the curriculum could underpin their planning and practice. The following paragraphs provide some examples.

The Learning Freeway in Havering recorded the level of the learner in reading, writing, speaking, listening and numeracy in terms of the national standards on the

initial assessment record that forms part of their Student Profile.

Many projects mapped their courses to either the standards or the curriculum. Where courses included basic skills or ESOL integrated with other learning, this provided an ideal opportunity to analyse how literacy, numeracy or language skills could be introduced through the course activities. Canterbury College mapped the activities in their IT course to the literacy and numeracy curricula. Individual learning plans recorded the achievements of individual learners in relation to the targets for the course and took account of learner's 'spiky profiles' by identifying achievements at a higher or lower level in some components.

Appendix 1 OCR OBJECTIVE 2 MAPPING TO BASIC SKILLS CURRICULUM

Given that Basic Skills students have 'spiky' profiles Entry Level 3 was designated the most suitable level for mapping across to the Basic Skills National Curriculum. Tutors were advised to differentiate within the groups and map accordingly at other levels, then record onto Individual Learning Plans.

STUDENT/TEACHER ACTIVITY	Place in BS Curriculum	Place in BS Curriculum
in pairs, discuss posters, advertisements and leaflets brought in by tutor (eg bitesize advertisements, college information posters, Al-Anon leaflet). Feedback your points of view to the tutor and discuss as a group. Be prepared to answer questions from the tutor or others about your opinions.	R/E3 1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9 R/E3 2 R/E3 3 Rw/E3.5	SLd/E3 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 3.5, 3.6 SLd/3.1
Make a bulleted list of the main points from the discussion using a word processing package	W/E3 1, 3.2, 3.3 Ww/E3 1, 3.2, 3.3	SLi/3.3
As a group, listen to and follow a demonstration from the tutor (eg highlighting, bolding). Repeat the activity at own PC/laptop		SLi/3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4
Do the "Fonts, fonts, fonts" exercise. Discuss in pairs what your chosen words mean to you and what kind of font you might choose. After using the thesaurus, show your partner which alternative words you have picked and say why you chose them.	Rw/E3.1	SLd3 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
Do the "Workout Gym" exercise. Follow the written instructions to produce the poster	R/E 3.1, 3.3, 3.5, 3.9 R/E3 1 Rw/E 3.1 R/E 3.8 Rw/E3 1, 3.2, 3.5	
Before designing own poster, read and understand OCR criteria from OCR booklet page 21		

Appendix 1 OCR OBJECTIVE 2 MAPPING TO BASIC SKILLS CURRICULUM

STUDENT/TEACHER ACTIVITY	Place in BS Curriculum	Place in BS Curriculum
Use menus on the word processing programme to insert clip-art (eg. Insert, Picture, Clip-art and choose from category)	RWE 3.5, 3.9	
Design your own poster and produce on the computer, using the "Workout Gym" instructions for help and asking the tutor when necessary. Design either two posters, or one poster and one card (Publisher)	RWE 3.1, 3.3, 3.7, 3.8 WWE3.1, 3.2, 3.3 WWE3.1, 3.4	SLC/E3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4
Discuss and describe the layout and choices of font, clip-art etc. with your tutor. Draft your write-up of this and discuss the draft with your tutor. Proofread and spellcheck your draft.	WWE3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 WWE3.1, 3.2, 3.3 WWE3.1, 3.2, 3.3	SLC/E3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4

RWE3.2 would be covered when students fill out their learning agreements.
RwE3.3 and 3.3 could be used in conjunction with the thesaurus exercise - i.e. use the computer thesaurus and compare results with a paper based thesaurus.

Where no course was planned and the teaching focused on individual needs, projects mapped individual learners' targets and/or achievements, as in the example from Suffolk Basic Skills in figure x above. Suffolk Basic Skills also developed grids that listed all the curriculum components and space for dates to be inserted when these were achieved. Such grids provide a visual means of tracking progress for learners especially where only a limited number of curriculum components can be covered in a short course. They could be used by the learner in further courses and provide some form of continuity.

Checklist:

- How will you establish a starting point for your learners?

- Is formal assessment appropriate? If not, how will you and the learner discover his/her level of skill?
- Will learning targets be set for the course or for individual learners?
- If learning targets are set for the course how will the achievement of individual learners be recorded?
- Have you provided opportunity to assess and record 'soft outcomes'?
- Have you provided opportunity to record achievements that are evidenced outside the course?

5 Working in partnership

The majority of the projects stressed the importance of partnership working. Many of the projects built successful relationships with partners to share resources, engage learners, target groups, promote and deliver courses. The most successful partnerships built on existing relationships rather than establishing new ones.

Staff who already had good connections with various groups in the community were most effective at reaching the target group of learners. The project advisors agreed that funding to build up such partnerships was absolutely essential. In many cases, the setting-up process was the key to the success of the provision. Partnership worked most effectively when the agencies recognised and played to their different strengths but also allowed for the different pressures they each worked under.

For example, a partnership in Malden, Essex targeted young mothers at home. Health workers were helpful in identifying who might want basic skills help but were under too much pressure to do the outreach themselves. In the conversations about feeding problems, nappy rash and maternity benefits, basic skills understandably slipped off the agenda! However, the basic skills workers were then able to follow up these contacts and make the home visits to engage learners.

The benefit of working with partners has a multiplier effect. Basic skills practitioners valued the opportunity to go outside the college and work with colleagues in other professions. The partner organisations welcomed the chance to raise awareness of their staff about basic skills issues.

College of Adult Education – Lancaster

The college of Adult Education in Lancaster ran courses in partnership with two voluntary organisations working with people with visual impairments.

Two courses were put together, both focusing on developing communication skills, particularly speaking and listening. These were mapped to the new standards for basic skills learners.

The partnership was strong and responsibilities within it were clear and well defined. It was agreed that the voluntary organisations would be responsible for recruitment as they were in regular contact with the target group on a regular basis. As a result, recruitment was straightforward and highly effective.

There have been many positive spin-offs for all partners. 'Visual awareness' sessions delivered by the voluntary organisation for project tutors from the college proved so successful that sessions are now being planned for all college staff.

The courses proved to be so popular with learners that a waiting list has resulted. Because of this, the college plans to run new courses based on their project model in the autumn.

Leicester College – Moving On Project

"Having project funding allowed us time: the time to make and build on partnerships; time to make all staff aware of the purpose of the project; time to plan the courses, and time to recruit. This is not possible through our normal funding mechanisms.

"My view is that this project has been a success, albeit the numbers have been lower than targeted. The fact that work has been established at all is impressive; the partnership is strong; tutors worked with the new curriculum and tried it out on standard college documentation; the model of outreach, delivery and evaluation as 'the course' is a model worth sharing with others."

Past funding has not recognised the importance of outreach and partnership working. In these projects staff have been able to include this as a key part of their enrolment and delivery. Colleges were able to under-

take both activity and delivery in partnership. Basic skills practitioners have been energised by the increased opportunity to outreach and it has successfully harnessed the energies of other agencies.

Medway Council – Oaklands Project

The development work for this project involved partnerships with the local school and the Community Volunteer Service. Publicity was well planned before the launch of the project. To help recruit new learners, this particular project appointed a 'Champion'. In this case, it was a school governor, Paddy, who identified a need to brush up on his own numeracy skills. He helped to encourage other fathers to attend.

Paddy said he left school at 13 and wanted to make up his education, especially maths and IT skills. Paddy was keen to promote the course and he and Keith, another father, were going to discuss the course and their experiences on local radio in order to encourage others, especially men, to join.

Keith and his wife were both attending and Keith said he had 'nil education' post-primary school and had spent time in prison. It had taken him a long time to decide to join the group and it was the personal contact from Paddy that had given him the courage to attend. It was clear that he had become very motivated and was now comfortable to talk about his learning needs in literacy and numeracy. His long-term goal was to successfully complete GCSE maths but he realised that there was a way to go to achieve this.

One mother was attracted to the course by the opportunity to improve her maths so she could help her children's homework. She was keen to make use of the opportunity to also develop their IT skills. She said she was nearly put off from coming because her daughter wasn't yet in school, but then she thought more about it and decided that it was something for both her and her daughter's benefit. She was working on decimals and mixed fractions.

The course was planned in response to the individual needs and skill levels. The target learners were male and publicity was clear about the numeracy and literacy contents of these courses. An integrated learning approach was used combining ICT with numeracy, literacy and communication skills. The project estimated that 100% of the time was spent on basic skills or ESOL. Students were able to use several laptops in groups, followed by individual programmes with CD ROMS and individual workshop support.

The project helped to forge links with the school. One of the tutors has been able to facilitate progression of students to evening classes. Partners were very pleased with the success of the project, which built on other programmes linked to family learning. For example, homework-related basic skills course.

However, it was considered important to be explicit about roles, ensure that each partner derived equal benefits from the relationship and acknowledge different ways of working.

Partner organisations were not just recruitment agencies for the convenience of the college. Working with community organisations certainly made recruitment easier but the relationship had to be one of equality. Both partners had to consciously manage the relationship.

Bolton Community Education

Partnerships were already established including development work through Standards Fund Traineeships. The basic skills team had worked through an interagency forum in order to develop the course with asylum seekers. There was a community empowerment ethos within the service, which worked from an audit of community needs and mentoring of local residents to become community ambassadors. It was thought that these projects would not have been possible without the existence of strong community partnerships, which had been developed over previous years.

Suffolk County Council Education Service

"The involvement of the Traveller Education Service and staff who were not only familiar with the traveller community in general, but who were also known to the individuals and families on the specific sites targeted, was crucial to the success of this project. In setting up similar projects in the future, we would try to find a way of planning for even greater involvement of local TES team members."

Checklist:

- Have we clearly agreed with our partner organisation how to share resources, engage learners, target

groups, promote and deliver courses? Who will do what?

- Have we recognised and played to our different strengths?
- Have we allowed for the different pressures we each work under?
- Have we structured opportunities for the partner organisations to raise awareness of their staff about basic skills issues?
- Have we funded time for basic skills practitioners to be involved in outreach work with the partners' staff?
- Have we been explicit about roles, ensuring that each partner derives equal benefits from the relationship and have we acknowledged different ways of working?
- Is the relationship one of equality? Or are we just using the partner organisation as a referral point or recruitment agency?
- Are roles and responsibilities clearly defined?

6 Staffing and staff development

Staff, their skills, dedication, hard work and empathy with learners were selected most frequently by partner organisations as factors crucial to the success of projects. Many reports from providers confirmed the important role played by both individuals and teams of staff in the success of projects, and learners' evaluations included numerous thanks to the teachers who had encouraged them and made it possible for them to learn.

The evaluation of the projects demonstrated the importance of staff who have the skills and knowledge to deliver a high standard of basic skills and ESOL teaching and who are appropriately qualified. Project advisors also felt that to be most effective, ESOL teachers needed to have an underpinning knowledge in linguistics.

Working in community settings is, however, different to working in a college or adult centre and requires additional skills and understanding. Partner organisations that work closely with the target community are often in the best position to provide support and advice. Awareness raising sessions for staff can also help them to obtain the information and understanding they need to work with a particular client group. In the 'Moving On' project run by Leicester College, teamworking was used to support a less-experienced member of staff.

When an adult is very new to learning the most important initial outcome is often confidence in himself/herself as a learner. Project advisors recognised the need for tutors to be able to facilitate learning which is process focused, rather than product focused. While the learner will have clear learning objectives for the course the teacher needs to recognise and encourage the learner's

development in terms of confidence and self-esteem. These so-called, 'soft outcomes' provide the foundation for further progress in basic skills or language learning and are discussed in more detail in chapter 4. Initial training needs to reflect the importance of this approach.

"It has made me realise that I can do things that I thought that I couldn't do before"

Learner evaluation

Leicester College – Moving On Project

The manager realised that not only experienced basic skills staff were required but also the project needed staff who would be comfortable and prepared to work with this specific client group and know how to deal with some of the potential issues that could arise. Two out of the three tutors used had such expertise. For the one who had less experience, the support provided by the other tutors through teamworking allowed effective delivery to take place.

Despite the fact that the project built on previous work with hostel staff, further work was required to ensure that all staff had received basic skills awareness training. This took longer than had been anticipated as hostel staff work shifts and some are part-time, so running one course was not enough.

Basic skills or ESOL awareness raising sessions were run for staff in partner organisations by a number of projects. These ensured that the staff understood the aims of the work and were better able to recognise basic skills needs in their members/clients and to provide support. In some cases partner organisations have requested further training for their staff to enable them to continue the work initiated by the project.

Several institutions recognised the opportunity to build their capacity for community-based provision by making staff training an integral part of their project.

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

"A key aspect of the project was staff training. As part of the project nine new Community Student Advisors were trained, together with 11 new Home tutors, ten new crèche workers and three Project Evaluators. The majority of these staff were from the Black and Asian community."

The value of recruiting staff from the target community was acknowledged by many projects and in projects working with ethnic minority communities or asylum seekers bi-lingual staff had a special role to play.

Touchstone Community Project – IT for Beginners

Derbyshire Community Education

"This project was formulated with Touchstone staff to enable students to develop IT skills and identify areas of literacy needs. The staff at Touchstone wish to develop a programme of basic skills training for their volunteer workers. This would enable them to continue the basic skills project within their own community."

Medway Adult and Community Learning Service

Turkish Café Project

"We were fortunate to recruit several ESOL-qualified bilingual tutors for the project. One has written about what the project has meant for her (see below). One of her groups consisted of seven Turkish women, half of whom did not receive any primary education in Turkey. A Turkish-speaking outreach worker had already contacted the women.

"Coming to classes in the Turkish café [previously only used by men socially in the evenings] was an enormous step for them. They decided early on that two hours a day

was not sufficient for them and requested a four-hour session.

"The women have grown in confidence and have begun speaking to their English neighbours. One student, for example, was able to ask her allotment neighbour how he grows his potatoes. For some of the women improvement is slow, but on every visit their enthusiasm for learning and commitment to their class was clear to see."

The women have previously been socially isolated and difficult for educationalists to reach. Now that they are attending ESOL classes there is scope to introduce other learning opportunities including health education, handicrafts and computers. Having a Turkish teacher attached to the group means that the women can be consulted about their educational needs and the pace at which other opportunities should be introduced, in their own language and in an informal situation."

The teacher wrote:

"Being involved in the ESOL project and having a first-rate opportunity to bring people to a knowledge and use of English in everyday life is a very satisfying experience. I am proud to be associated with the project.

"Being a teacher means a great deal to me. It has always been my vocation. Teaching has an important role in the social life of the society in which I grew up in Turkey. I now find that I am able to re-establish my social identity – something which I had felt would

In some cases members of the target community were recruited to act as 'learning ambassadors' or 'learning champions'.

Croydon Community Education and Training Project for asylum seekers

Three young refugees who had recently completed a year's study at Croydon College acted as mentors. They attended mentoring training which included: *"the nature of mentoring, empathy training and the importance of being non-judgemental when dealing with others. In the final analysis, however, the support...[they] were able to offer was equally to do with having had similar experiences of being newly arrived. They were very aware that they themselves had been in the same position, were happy to help and understood very well what sort of help the newly-arrived students needed."*

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Walsall College of Arts and Technology

The most innovative aspect of the project was the development and accreditation of Community Learning Advocates, who were able to spend time infiltrating community venues, getting to know potential learners and consequently identifying real learners' needs. As a result of this, provision was accurately linked to learners needs.

Where subject specialists are working with basic skills practitioners on courses they need some induction and, as noted in an earlier chapter, it is important that time is set aside for both tutors to work together to plan the course.

The Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Skills provides a valuable introduction to teaching of basic skills or ESOL and was widely used but it needs to be acknowledged that this is only an initial qualification. The project advisors saw evidence of the need for continued support structures to be in place to enable new teachers to develop further basic skills expertise.

We know from our own experience that one of the most effective methods of staff development is peer observation. Tutors need an opportunity to observe other teachers teaching. As basic skills tutors and trainers ourselves, we learned a huge amount from visiting these projects, a number of which could be held up as good practice. Where it is possible for this to be arranged with no detrimental effect on the group, opportunities for observation should be used to extend the experience and understanding of teachers new to basic skills.

The evaluation of the Basic Skills and ESOL in local communities projects showed, once again, the importance of staff who have the skills and knowledge to deliver a high standard of basic skills and ESOL teach-

ing and who are appropriately qualified. Project advisors also felt that to be most effective, ESOL tutors needed to have underpinning knowledge in linguistics.

We know from our own experience that one of the most effective methods of staff development is peer observation. Tutors need an opportunity to observe other teachers teaching. As basic skills tutors and trainers ourselves, we learned a huge amount from visiting these projects, a number of which could be held up as good practice. Given the national shortage of basic skills tutors, we are aware that there is an urgent need for recruitment and initial training of new tutors. As part of this initial training, all tutors should be able to visit basic skills provision and observe good practice. This may not always be possible – it may be too costly, too time consuming, too far away or sometimes there just aren't enough examples of excellence to observe. To facilitate the training of new tutors and other staff, we would suggest a bank of training videos showing examples of good classroom practice. This idea has already been used in the ESOL curriculum training delivered by the National ESOL Training and Development Project.

Project advisors felt it was important that trainee basic skills tutors were able to facilitate learning which is process focused, not only product focused. Learners may achieve their personal aims, but may not have an end product that illustrates this. We appreciate this poses a problem for accreditation and funding. Soft outcomes, while well understood by the basic skills practitioner, are the most difficult to evidence for the record of achievement and for funding purposes.

We also felt that while it is clearly valuable to train subject tutors, using the City and Guilds 9281, it must be acknowledged that this only an initial qualification and continued support structures need to be in place to further develop basic skills expertise.

Double staffing can work well as a staff development

opportunity as well as a resource for the learners. We saw a good use of double staffing in the Army and Uppingham Community College project as a literacy and a numeracy tutor worked together to cope with a wide range of learning skills and needs.

Across the projects, it became apparent that appropriate training for support staff was also fundamental to good practice. Many projects acknowledged the need for suitably qualified and experienced crèche workers. However, two colleges reported a difficulty recruiting suitable, qualified, bilingual childcare workers. As these projects ran over the summer, crèche workers had to be particularly flexible as older children on school holidays used the crèche too.

Checklist:

- Do our staff have adequate training to deliver high quality literacy, numeracy or ESOL learning? What support can we offer to extend their skills and experience?
- Is it necessary to recruit new staff? If so what will their training needs be and how can these be met?
- What do our staff need to learn to work effectively with the target community and how can this learning be obtained?
- What do staff from our partner organisations need to know about basic skills or ESOL? How can we provide opportunity for them to learn this?
- Is it possible to recruit staff who share a background with the target audience?
- Is it possible to recruit staff who speak the same language as the target community?
- Is there a role for mentors or learning ambassadors in our project? If so what training do they need?
- How will we offer training for any subject specialists involved in our delivery?

7 Record keeping and assessment

While it was acknowledged that projects had to have a structured system to monitor learners' progress, we saw little evidence of mapping to the new literacy and numeracy standards. Tutors said they felt uncomfortable in using the standards because they hadn't received the training. Some of the best record keeping was at Leicester College where tutors had mapped individual learning plans to the new curriculum. In East Yorkshire, tutors also mapped to the curriculum. They, incidentally, had not received training. In some projects, managers had received the training but tutors not. This needs to be addressed.

Filton College

- Initial assessment – some students completed the BeST Basic Skills Assessment (IT based). Some took the BSA assessment. Other students were asked to give written answers to initial interview questions and tutors made an assessment of skill levels. In some cases tutors also completed a Learner Profile form assessing current skills and skill gaps. There was little evidence of objective basic skills assessment for students on the integrated courses.
- Tutors assessed achievement taking into account work produced in the learners portfolio.
- Student evaluation forms recorded outcomes such as improved confidence in learning skills.

The issue of assessment was important to everyone we spoke to. Few projects completed formal assessment. An exception was the Uppingham Community College

project with the Army, where the Army test was used as an assessment at Entry level 3/Level 1. There the tutors devised individual learning plans based on the initial assessment and worked on the learners' strengths.

Tile Hill College – Foleshill and Hillfield project

This project targeted entry-level students who did not want to attend college. This client group need local classes where they know people and they have easy access to a crèche. Support in this area was offered to learners. Childcare facilities were available, as this was important to learners and important to the success of the course. The learner was put at the centre of the process. Gender-sensitive courses were made available for some client groups. The pattern of delivery was flexible according to the need. At the Muslim Resource Centre the courses were timed around childcare needs. A high proportion of those recruited had ESOL needs, at the start they preferred to be in a group with people from the same cultural background.

The basic skills element was implicit within all publicity and the numeracy and literacy elements were discussed fully at the start of the programmes. The course was highly practical and backed up by carefully-produced resources. All students had individual learning plans and students' targets and retention were tracked. Learning goals were often related to practical skills and courses were flexible in order to meet the needs and context for learning of individual students. Learning goals were not set against the national standards.

The sewing course was based on learning sewing skills with integrated basic skills learning. ESOL linked to garment cutting or sewing classes was an acceptable activity for those who were limited culturally in what they could take part in. For example, sewing words and parts of the body were learnt alongside learning to take measurements in preparation for selecting the right pattern.

One mature lady, Balbira had been in England for 20 years. She had never been to school in her country of origin but was eager to learn. On her first day she couldn't draw a straight line. By the fifth week she could follow a pattern, 'meet and greet', write sentences and understand the difference between adjectives and adverbs.

One young woman, Manjit, came to the first session in her wedding dress after two weeks in the country. She was accompanied by her mother-in-law for the first two sessions until the course was deemed acceptable. Manjit made a group of friends who began to support her. The tutor thought that many of the participants at the Muslim Resource Centre programme would never have been able to attend at the college/learning centre.

Other projects used self-identification and self-assessment against questions about learners' skills levels.

It is also important to ask whether assessment is appropriate at all in engagement courses. If it is appropriate, at what stage? In the same way as the 'basic skills by stealth' question troubled us, the 'assessment by stealth' issue is problematic. There is a tension around explicit assessment of basic skills for the hard-to-reach groups. Do you share your assessment of the learner's needs with the learner? Is it dishonest if you don't, or will it scare the learner away?

Checklist:

- How will we conduct the initial assessment?
- Will assessment results be fed back to the learner?
How?
- How will the initial assessment inform the individual learning plan (ILP)? What other data will inform the ILP?
- Will ongoing assessment take place? How will this be recorded?
- Will learners keep records? How?
- Will learners be involved in self-assessment? How?
Could this be spoken or written? Could this be in mother tongue?
- Will learners be invited to evaluate the course?
- How will we ensure we meet the learner's individual goals and targets?

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8 Use of information technology

Information Technology (IT) was used in many of the projects. Unfortunately due to the small proportion of projects we were able to visit (22 projects of 220) we did not see as many examples of best practice as we would have liked. We relied on the reports of project staff, who found that it was an effective method of attracting new learners, who wanted to gain IT skills.

Some projects were using IT as a 'hook' to get learners in. The learners were eager to enrol, IT was seen as prestigious and there was no stigma in admitting a lack of IT skills. Others, like the Learning Freeway Project with Havering College were teaching IT skills alongside basic skills. However, from discussions with the advisors who visited the projects running these types of courses, tutors felt that while it was useful as a tool it could hide learner's basic skills learning needs. There were concerns about how embedded basic skills were taught in the IT course.

A project in North Derbyshire, set up in partnership with Bolsover Mental Health, had as a target group care workers working with clients with learning difficulties. A number of the care workers had basic skills needs and were experiencing difficulty in recording client progress. They were unwilling at this stage to confront their basic skills needs at work and so IT was used in a training course as part of a "softly softly" approach. The course was designed to teach arts and craft – glass painting, mirror painting, pewter frames – as these were obviously

Havering Adult College – The Learning Freeway

'Silver Surfers' Basic Skills in the Community

The target group for this project were the over 50s, who are recognised not only as having the highest percentage of low literacy and numeracy skills but also a need to develop and improve IT skills.

Groups were kept to a maximum of seven students with two tutors to each session. The duration of the course was for 30 guided learning hours, delivered as six hours per week for five weeks.

The internet formed a major tool for use not only developing basic skills, but also doing this through following learner's interest e.g. family history, gardening, e-mailing friends and family and other topics of interest.

By the end of the course, students could effectively search the net, set up and use an e-mail account and design and develop a one-page web page on a subject of their choice. They could feel confident in using the net at home to follow up skills developed in the classroom. Progress of each student was recorded after each session on diary sheets designed by the students themselves.

"I am gaining more confidence all the time."

"I felt that my children and grandchildren will know that I now have a little knowledge of the Internet."

"It was very informative and opened up a new world. I'm grateful for the lessons and the knowledge is never wasted."

useful skills workers could use in the workplace with the clients. The care workers used laptops to record the skills they developed and complete record cards.

Accreditation in a new and attractive skills area like IT can be a real hook for learners. In Salisbury, the college worked with a local bakery to develop workplace basic skills training. Six shop floor workers were released to attend weekly IT training with integrated literacy and numeracy. The course was

perceived to have been very successful with all learners achieving OCN accreditation in IT and internet. IT was key to motivating and retaining learners as well as being their opportunity to achieve accreditation.

Barnfield College in Luton ran three courses, one of which was ESOL with IT. The courses ran in community venues – a mosque, a youth centre and a women's centre – and drew learners from the most deprived wards in Luton. The learners had never used a computer before and were introduced to the college library facilities and the LearnDirect resources. Most learners went on to ESOL provision in the college in September.

Thanet College Community Education Department developed an innovative course, Play To Win, based around the Age of Empires computer strategy game. The course failed to recruit new learners perhaps because they lacked confidence to participate in the competitive element of the project or fear of the IT expressed by older potential learners. Plans were revised and learners recruited through the college guidance and admissions section. Perhaps this course was a little too innovative for the target group.

Checklist:

- Are we clear about the function of IT in this course? Is it the 'hook' to draw learners in or will we teach IT skills?
- How will basic skills be made explicit in the course?
- Will the IT element hide the basic skills needs that learners may have?
- Will IT intimidate new learners? How will we overcome this?
- Will IT isolate learners working alone on a computer? How will we take account of this?

- Have we researched basic skills software appropriate for the learners?
- How will we adapt materials for learners with visual impairment, second language needs, etc?

9 Working with asylum seekers and refugees

A number of the projects had as their target group asylum seekers and refugees. The work threw up a number of interesting issues and some examples of good practice. Asylum seekers, while often highly motivated, come to ESOL courses with other things on their mind. There is a myriad of unresolved issues which may prevent the learner from attending regularly or being fully able to concentrate on the job of teaching and learning. For example: immigration status, health problems, isolation, worry about family members, poverty and homelessness. Indeed, the odds against successful learning are so great it is remarkable that some of the learners, teachers and projects were so successful.

The case studies in this chapter highlight areas of good practice in partnership working, well-planned course delivery, record keeping and assessment. The projects indicate that outreach work and partnership building has been the key to success in working with asylum seekers and refugees. Outreach workers who share and understand the cultural differences and barriers to learning which face these groups are invaluable. Their knowledge is important in planning the delivery of the courses so that a learning environment is offered that will attract the target group. In planning the delivery of the course, factors such as location, lesson timetable, childcare provision and transport are even more important than with other basic skills learners.

Asylum seekers are often learners in a hurry. The reasons that caused them to flee their country of origin may have interrupted study or a career. They want to retrain or learn English as quickly as possible to resume normal life, set up home and bring up their children. Therefore, a class of two hours ESOL per week won't meet the needs of this group but rather intensive, focused courses, perhaps with a vocational link are most appropriate. A number of projects responded to this need for intensive tuition. Oxfordshire ran a three-week intensive ESOL summer school offering ESOL, literacy and IT. St Philips Sixth Form College in Birmingham ran 15-hours-per-week courses over four weeks.

Several of the projects reported attendance or punctuality problems, but this is to be expected and does not detract from the desirability of intensive or full-time courses. The asylum seeker may need to attend appointments with the doctor, solicitor, National Asylum Support Service (NASS) agency or immigration officials and these appointments are often made at short notice. S/he may be dispersed to another part of the country, again at short notice, or the date of dispersal changed several times. The CETS project in Croydon reported asylum-seeking families packed, ready and in the queue to get on the bus when they were told they were not to be dispersed that day.

In the case of asylum seekers, the 'spikey profile' of learner skills may be particularly evident. The learner may have good written English but a low level of spoken communication in English. S/he may have higher education qualifications and a professional background. In this case, open learning and self-directed study packages may be appropriate. Southwark College, in partnership with local group, KUL TUR RA MA TAZZ, aimed to develop this learner autonomy.

Specialist advice and guidance at an early stage is essential for asylum seekers. Within Information, Advice and Guidance this type of work is highly special-

ised and requires a detailed knowledge of immigration law, entitlements, qualification equivalence and appropriate conversion courses or professional courses with language support. In many instances, adult learning providers are best advised to seek support from a specialist agency such as the Refugee Council, Refugee Action, the Refugee Advice and Guidance Unit (RAGU) or the Refugee Training and Advice Service (RETAS). This is an occasion when it is a wise move not to try to meet all the needs of one's learners. However, early advice is essential so that the asylum seeker does not waste valuable time or miss opportunities.

In the same way that it is important to recognise the specialist skills needed to give competent advice and guidance to asylum seekers, it is also important to value the roles of other agencies who may be involved in the work with asylum seekers. From the project reports, it became apparent that the additional funding for development work and partnership building is essential. Organisations such as local councils, housing associations, social services and voluntary community organisations are likely to be in touch with the asylum seekers. It may be helpful to form strong links with these partner agencies, as in the case of Oxfordshire County Council, who ran a summer school with five partners including local social services and a local charity working with refugees and asylum seekers.

In addition, bilingual outreach workers and tutors are invaluable in developing relationships with asylum seekers and refugees to build confidence and trust to encourage learners to attend a course and then to continue with their learning.

The situation and circumstances of the asylum seeker as ESOL learner may be very different from the circumstances of the ESOL learner from a minority ethnic community settled in Britain. For example, the unaccompanied, young man from Afghanistan in Oxford-

Oxfordshire County Council

The learner was a young, unaccompanied asylum seeker who enrolled on our beginner ESOL course. We were in close contact with our partners in the social service asylum team and we were able to discover that the learner had been arrested. His social worker and tutor agreed that the course was of great benefit to him, socially and educationally. Indeed, he had been setting a good example to others in his education to the course. We therefore sent a letter, outlining the situation from our perspective, for the social services team to use as appropriate. The letter was used in court and was considered a key factor in his release. He has not been in further trouble and he is now enrolled on a full-time ESOL course in a local FE college. Without the additional development funding, the situation might not have been picked up as quickly.

We feel this is an interesting case study for a number of reasons. Firstly, it highlights the vulnerability of many ESOL learners and the extra support (and staff time) they often need. It demonstrates the wide-reaching positive effects for the learner of close partnership work for the benefit of learner and providers.

shire may be isolated from his community, suffering from the effects of poverty, distressed about the unknown fate of friends and family back home or suffering from trauma as a result of torture. The Bangladeshi woman in Tower Hamlets may be living in safety in her extended family, in a neighbourhood full of Bangladeshi neighbours, where many shopkeepers speak Bengali and where there are community centres she may attend.

On the other hand, the essential teaching and learning for the two learners may be the same. ESOL learners all need initial assessment, an individual learning plan, thoughtful delivery of the course and regular assessment and review. The four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing will still need to be taught. The course and the learner's progress will be mapped against the national standards and curriculum.

However, differences of emphasis are often apparent. Many asylum seekers with previous education qualifica-

tions have a high level of written English language skills but have not had an opportunity to practise spoken language. These learners need a wide range of opportunities to listen and speak to develop the skills to express themselves with confidence at interview. The teacher may need to emphasise stress, register and intonation to help the learner deal with the accents and regional variations they will hear in the UK.

Asylum seekers and refugees are often highly motivated learners. Many have professional backgrounds or have come from an interrupted education, where they were successful students. Poor attendance, poor punctuality or lack of concentration in these cases should not always be ascribed to poor motivation. The asylum seeker may be severely traumatised by the experience in the home country. In this case, it is essential to seek support from specialist agencies such as social services, the Medical Foundation or the Breathing Space project at the Refugee Council. Staff who have the skills and experience to deal with victims of torture are best placed to work with the asylum seeker in this respect.

It is also important to expect that while a group of asylum seekers in a class together may derive tremendous support and companionship from learning with others who have shared the same difficult experiences, this may occasionally make a stressful and potentially explosive dynamic in the classroom. A group of 15 worried and distressed adults in one room may challenge the most experienced tutor. In the Bolton Community Education Service Changing Rooms project the course had a positive effect for learners in all kinds of ways.

Checklist:

- Have we set up effective partnerships to support the needs asylum seekers may have?
- Have we designed a course where the learner can progress as quickly as they are able?

Changing Rooms

Bolton Community Education Service

The Changing Rooms project addressed the basic skills needs of asylum seekers while offering an introduction to DIY, decorating and interior design.

One of the aspects of the course is to celebrate the way in which very isolated and disenfranchised individuals became effective group members and were able to develop personally through this opportunity. Most learners were asylum seekers from North Africa. Some shared details about horrific and devastating experiences they had faced.

One learner had witnessed the slaughter of her husband and sons and had fled her home country with nothing. Recently, housed in a disadvantaged area of Bolton, she found herself with no friends and no support. She had come into contact with the Community Education Service when attending a church drop-in for homeless people and was encouraged to enrol on the Changing Rooms course. The project enabled her to meet new people and she has subsequently enrolled on further courses.

- Is there a range of opportunities for progression routes so that learners are not 'left' at the end of the course?
- Is there sufficient practical support? Is there transport, food and childcare provided? Can asylum seekers afford to get to the course?
- Have we set up adequate initial assessment, with mother tongue support?
- Will specialists provide the advice and guidance on qualification equivalence?
- Will learners take responsibility for their portfolio of work, record keeping and assessment so that they can carry the work with them if they are dispersed?

Appendix 1:

Criteria for good practice

In December 2000 a focus group met, at the invitation of the FEFC, to develop criteria for good practice in community-based basic skills delivery. The group included representatives from the FEFC, the Basic Skills Agency, the Further Education Development Agency and NIACE.

Engaging new learners

Good practice might include:

- Targeting people who are not necessarily following a basic skills programme but where a need has been identified;
- Not limiting programmes to specific target groups;
- Offering programmes previously successful in one area in other venues or communities;
- Being sensitive to learners' needs in recruitment;
- Building on the specialist knowledge of particular target groups held within your organisation and those in partnership e.g. those on probation, in hostels for homeless people, etc.

Working in partnerships

Good practice might include:

- Collaboration to break down barriers to learning e.g.

- childcare, course hours, venue and curriculum;
- Working towards a community of interests;
- Honest mapping of knowledge, experience and expertise leading to even sharing of work and genuine partnership work;
- Strategy which is jointly agreed and written by the partners;
- Clarification of partner roles;
- Developing and monitoring an action plan;
- Being clear about what development work needs to be done before the programme starts;
- Ensuring programmes are community led and community owned;
- Building on existing partnerships, recognising that time is needed to build successful working relationships involving partners in identifying particular topics/curriculum areas/disciplines within which basic skills can be embedded;
- Identifying partnerships with a good track record in:
 - Using the community to help research demand;
 - Identifying need and responding quickly;
 - Community involvement with developing programmes;
 - Working with hard-to-reach groups;
 - Planning and implementing innovative provision;
 - Evaluating results;
- Using programmes to estimate numbers of students, resource needs, etc. for future provision;
- Working with local communities in your neighbourhood and with communities of interest, e.g. those using allotments, parents of children with disabilities, casual taxi drivers.

Innovation in Outreach Delivery

Good practice might include:

- Embedding basic skills in other provision or comm-

unity activity e.g. how to set up a playgroup, a credit union;

- Naming the provision so that it reflects the focus of interest rather than the basic skills involved e.g. mending a motorbike, building a garden shed;
- Innovation which can be seen to benefit the learner and the partnership;
- Making the practical relevance of basic skills clear to learners;
- Creative thinking about the length and duration of the course;
- Learner-centred provision;
- Taking risks, including taking on 'non-viable' groups;
- Using initial taster activities to attract and motivate learners, making it clear when assessment will take place;
- Considering ethical implications of 'hidden' assessment;
- Using a robust quality assurance system;
- Using ICT to support learning;
- Choosing accreditation carefully so that it is appropriate for the programme and will not constrain learning.

Making the match between learners' needs and the institution offer

Good practice might include:

- A focus on the individual learner and the learning programme;
- Identifying tutors with additional skills e.g. the skills relevant to the focus of a programme such as computing skills or how to set up a new community group;
- Using teachers with the right match of skills as well as the knowledge and ability to relate well to the target group;

- Offering ongoing and personal support;
- Addressing quality assurance issues, using existing systems where appropriate, being innovative where they are not;
- Addressing retention difficulties in innovative ways;
- Using mentors for on-going support;
- Using identified good practice in other contexts;
- Specifically addressing ESOL needs, perhaps in separate provision;
- Considering basic skills provision related to the needs of specific employment contexts.

Recording Achievement

Good practice might include:

- Using assessment that is sensitive and rigorous and helps learners to progress;
- Ensuring that all tutors are systematic in recording learning;
- Mapping individual learners' outcomes to the national standards for literacy and numeracy;
- Recording outcomes that transfer to other areas of life and skills;
- Discussing transferability of outcomes with learners and ensuring they are aware of their achievements;
- Having a system for recording hard (i.e. qualification) and soft (i.e. personal achievement) gains – possibly on a record of achievement model;
- Taking into account attendance, punctuality and the development of study skills in recording achievement;
- Identifying a simple system for collecting evidence of learning which is appropriate for the learner and the organisation;
- Setting clear learning goals where programmes are non-qualification bearing.

Promoting and tracking progression routes for learners

Good practice might include:

- Tracking a sample of learners;
- Having a clear exit strategy for all learners;
- Organising a certificate evening to celebrate achievement;
- Emphasising the development of skills and attitudes necessary to maintain lifelong learning including the capacity to learn independently;
- Ensuring that information, advice and guidance is part of the process;
- Promoting progression within partnership organisations where possible;
- Using reunion follow up to obtain detailed information on progression;
- Identifying how other types of progression, e.g. into employment will be tracked;
- Working with partners to obtain information on progression;
- Identifying common areas of weakness in recording progression and using this project to suggest ways of addressing them;
- Identifying a portion of funding for evaluation, including recording the progression of learners.

Opening up a new world

A good practice guide for delivering basic skills and ESOL in the local community

Sue Grief, Helen Murphy, Bhupinder Nijjar, Chris Taylor

'Past initiatives to improve literacy and numeracy skills have produced limited progress...only bold and imaginative policies, engaging those who can make a real difference in the workplace and communities, will change this cultural inheritance'

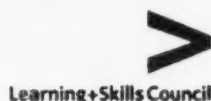
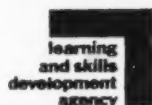
Skills for life: the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills. DfEE, 2001

In 2001, the Learning and Skills Council provided funding to extend outreach provision in local community settings through pilot projects. The aim of the projects was to explore innovative and effective ways to attract new basic skills and ESOL learners from 'hard-to-reach' groups and to build the capacity of institutions to undertake further outreach work.

This guide brings together the good practice demonstrated and developed through these projects. Using case studies it explores topics such as:

- Engaging new learners
- Working in partnerships
- Staff developments
- Recording outcomes
- Using information technology

Opening up a new world will inspire practitioners to try new, unusual and innovative approaches to basic skills.



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